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# ENGLAND AND HER COLONIES

CONSIDERED IN RELATION TO THE ABORIGINES, WITH A  
PROPOSAL FOR AFFORDING THEM MEDICAL RELIEF.

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The Aborigines who may be termed British, amount, at a low estimate, to one Million inhabiting Australia; one Million in the South Seas, including New Zealand; half a Million still surviving in North and South America; and two Millions in Western and Southern Africa; with several Millions of the more barbarous tribes in British India and its borders, and in the Eastern Archipelago and Indian Ocean; it may therefore be safely said, that our extensive possessions bring us in contact with more varieties of the human race than is the case with any other power; it is to England, therefore, that the world looks for an example in the treatment of the coloured races; but whether we regard the past or the present, the history of these people is a subject of mournful reflection. Instead of efforts to check the progress of oppression in our colonies, we have allowed the spirit of the early Spaniards to keep pace with emigration, and to justify oppression the monstrous doctrine has been promulgated that the coloured tribes are not only an inferior race by nature, but totally incapable of improvement—and there are some who consider them the connecting link between the monkey and man. Many who do not subscribe to this doctrine, have fallen into a delusion of another kind. They are inclined to the belief that the extinction of the Aborigines is inevitable, that it is an appointment of Heaven, and that every attempt to arrest their doom, must of necessity be unavailing. In fine, to use an Indian metaphor, that “the coloured man must melt before the white man like snow before the sun.”

Those who argue in favour of the general inferiority



of the coloured races, must have seen the aborigines only in their degraded and debased condition—a people fallen under the infliction of injuries and the exercise of oppression—cruelties which we have committed, causing desolation and utter ruin to those who once composed the most noble of our race. We have only to look at home, and we find men of all capacities, from the greatest statesman down to the man of the most shallow intellect. If in surveying the globe in an ethnographical point of view, intellectual power be the object of our search, we shall not look in vain amongst the uncivilized; and if we are in quest of physical superiority we must altogether yield the palm to the coloured man. Is it to be wondered that men habituated to a roving life should, in the first instance, refuse to engage in pursuits altogether foreign to them? To expect to bring the coloured man to lay aside his erratic habits, and at once adopt the plough and the harrow is inconsistent with past experience and the records of history. If we refer to the period when Rome was in all her greatness, we shall find that the process of civilization among the barbarous hordes—a class to which the British then belonged—was by no means rapid. Step by step man has advanced, nor must we now look for the instantaneous adoption by the uncivilized races of the habits and manners of civilized life. No rational mind will expect a change of such magnitude to be effected at once, but if time be given, their improvement is certain. Civilization has effected, is effecting, and will effect all that can be expected under the circumstances in which they have been, are, and may be placed; and if the coloured tribes, instead of being extirpated, were encouraged to locate themselves and become civilized, there is no doubt, of their preservation from extinction, and of their ultimate greatness. This observation is borne out by the advancement in civilization which the Creeks and Cherokees had made prior to their removal from their patrimonial territory.



That the coloured man must retire before his white invader, or in other words, that he is devoted by Providence to destruction, is an assertion as atrocious as it is impious—impious, since it calls into question the beneficent and merciful character of the Most High. To crush in its bud the first indications of such a doctrine, must be the wish of every Christian. War, pestilence, and famine, and abridgement of territory are surely sufficient causes for the decline of the coloured man, without having recourse to mysterious agency: but we have yet another—intoxicating liquors—the accursed “fire water,”—that poisonous draught which plunges the coloured man with headlong infatuation into the most horrid scenes of riot and bloodshed—that fiend which causes to flow with equal indifference, the blood of friend and foe, and even severs the dearest ties of affection by acts of violence at which the wretch himself trembles. The same acuteness of feeling—the same pangs of remorse which embitter the last moments of the white murderer, accompany the coloured man to his ignominious grave.

Painful in themselves, indeed, are such reflections, but they are still more painful when we consider how far these acts are tolerated by ourselves, and that the amelioration of the coloured man's condition would inevitably flow from a plan of conduct and treatment based upon sound principles. Such a plan it is the fervent hope of this Society, at an early period to lay before the Government, feeling assured, that through it alone, really effectual measures to this end can be carried out. With the Gospel let us introduce comfort and happiness; let the arts of life be associated with our religious precepts.

Since the first edition of this pamphlet was printed, the Society has learned with great pleasure, through the Sydney Monitor, which contains Sir George Gipps' Address to the Legislative Council of New South Wales, that the late Colonial Secretary, Lord John Russell, had



expressly directed liberal provisions to be made for the protection and civilization of the Natives of Australia. The following is an extract from Lord John Russell's despatch :—

“ I have not yet touched on the application of the Land Fund to the protection of the Aborigines. It is my opinion that fifteen per cent. of the yearly produce of sales should be so applied. It will be for you to consider the details of the appropriation. But I must for the future require, that on or before the 15th of January, in every year, a report should be made to you, for the information of Her Majesty and of Parliament, stating all the transactions of the past year, relating to the condition of the Natives, their residence at any particular spot, the changes in their social condition, the schools, and all other particulars, including the state and prospects of the aboriginal races.

“ I shall transmit a copy of this despatch, with some other remarks in reference to the same subject, to the Lieutenant-Governors of Port Phillip, Western Australia, South Australia, and New Zealand.”

It was doubtless under the influence of the same enlightened benevolence which dictated the foregoing paragraph, that Lord John Russell so readily acquiesced in the proposal for sending out a Commissioner selected and approved by this Society, to investigate the condition of the Australian Aborigines, and on the spot devise appropriate measures for their benefit, and the common security of themselves and the colonists. Had not the projected plan been rendered abortive by the Western Australian Company, (for full particulars see Appendix to Fourth Annual Report,) we should soon have had the satisfaction of seeing devised and brought into execution a practical system of civilization, the funds requisite for which Lord John Russell had, as it now appears, already amply provided.

The Society's operations embracing, as they do, an extensive correspondence at home and abroad, the publication of documents and papers, public meetings to advocate aboriginal rights, interviews and communications with different departments of the state, the presentation of petitions to the Crown and to the legislature, necessarily require considerable time and labour. But while engaged in summing up the evidence that has been from time to time laid before it; while the Government has yet to be aroused to a sense of duty, long neglected; and while other important duties claim the Society's atten-



tion, whole tribes—nay nations, are being swept from the face of the earth by diseases both of a demoralizing and contagious nature—diseases introduced by Europeans—poisons, destroying life at its very source, administered by whites without an attempt at an antidote.

If we turn our attention to America, we find in the early part of the sixteenth century, on the occasion of an epidemic small pox, that “the hand of God fell heavily upon the natives, with such a mortall stroake that they died on heaps as they lay in their houses, and the living that were able to shift for themselves would runne away, and let them dy, and let their carkases ly above the ground without buriall. For in a place where many inhabited there hath been but one left alive to tell what became of the rest, the living being not able to bury the dead : they were left for crowes, kites, and vermine to prey upon ; and the bones and skulls upon the several places of their habitations made such a spectacle, that as one travelled in the forest, near Massachusetts, it seemed to be a new found Golgotha.” (New English Canaan, by T. Morton, 1637.)

From the census of 1699, just sixty-two years from the settlement of Virginia, we discover, that the natives inhabiting that colony, were reduced to one-third of the former numbers, small pox being assigned as the principal cause. (Jefferson’s Notes on Virginia, p. 153.)

It is stated by Humboldt, that a plague called Matlazahuatl prevailed among the Indian race in Mexico, in 1545, which carried off 800,000, and in 1576, 2,000,000.

Mr. Beale, the talented author of a work, entitled “The Natural History of the Sperm Whale, and a Sketch of a South-Sea Whaling Voyage,” witnessed at Monta Christa, in 1831, on the coast of Peru, a “dreadful scene of sickness and lingering deaths, and not a single medical man of any kind resided among them, to relieve their pains, and therefore stern disease, of which there



existed a great variety, took its painful course unchecked."

If we turn our attention to New Holland, a portion of the globe to which both the rich and the poor are now looking with the most anxious attention, we find similar results.

"In 1789, the natives of Port Jackson were visited by the small pox, and the number that it swept off was incredible. A native, who at that time resided in Sydney, on going down to the harbour to look for his former companions, was described by those who witnessed his emotions, as suffering the extreme of agony. He looked anxiously into the different coves that they visited; not a vestige on the sand was to be found of human foot; the excavations in the rocks were filled with the bodies of those who had fallen victims to the disorder; not a living person was any where to be met with. He lifted up his hands and eyes in silent agony for some time; at length he exclaimed, 'All dead! all dead!' and then hung his head in mournful silence. The disease was not confined to Port Jackson. On visiting Broken Bay, the path was in many places covered with skeletons, and the same spectacles were to be met with in the hollows of most of the rocks of that harbour. To the disorder the natives gave the name of Gal-gal-la. Two elderly men, a boy and a girl, affected with the disease, were received into the colony, and nursed by the native above mentioned, whose attention to them during their illness excited the admiration of all. He took the disorder, and in eight days fell a victim to his own humanity, to the infinite regret of every one who had witnessed how little of the savage was found in his manner, and how quickly he was substituting in its place a docile, affable, and truly amiable deportment."—Collins's New South Wales, p. 57.

Notwithstanding this, it was not until May, 1804, "that the blessings of vaccination were introduced into the settlement. The virus was, however, almost imme-



diately lost, and the colony once more left without a protection from that most dreadful of all disorders the small pox.”—Mann’s Present Picture of N. S. Wales, p. 14.

In 1829, when Capt. Sturt penetrated into the interior of New South Wales, he found the small pox carrying off the natives on the banks of the Darling in great numbers. The following year on the Murray, he found raging in all its fury that dreadful malady—the offspring of immorality. Nor were the youngest infants exempt from the disease. Indeed, so young were some whose condition Capt. Sturt describes as truly distressing, that he had no doubt they had been born in a state of disease. Sir Thomas Mitchell has noticed the same deplorable state of the natives in parts of the country which he visited. Mr. Beale found the disease depopulating the natives of Polynesia; at Bolabola, in 1832, many laboured under the effects of gunshot wounds, for which they have to thank the whites, who taught them the use of powder and shot, but more from the effects of a demoralizing intercourse with foreigners. Men, women, and even little children in arms, were suffering from the dreadful malady, for the cure or alleviation of which they possessed neither knowledge nor means. “These wretched people, who have suffered torments of various kinds, without a prospect of relief,” says Mr. Beale, “looked upon me as an angel sent from heaven to administer to their wants, and relieve the poignancy of their pains. How is it that proper persons are not sent out for this purpose? If a small portion of the immense sums that are annually expended upon missionaries were devoted to such real usefulness, the poor natives would indeed feel grateful for such blessings, and their minds would be rendered more susceptible of being impressed with a belief in the Christian faith.”

Not content with recording these appalling facts in his Journal, this gentleman last year published a well digested system for affording medical relief to the suffering inhabitants of the South Seas. With much good



feeling, however, he has laid aside his own immediate views of a distinct and independent plan, and has now thrown his talent and experience into the scale of this Society, hoping that, sooner or later, the suffering inhabitants of Polynesia may be blessed with the presence of one of its medical agents. It would be well for mankind if their advocates were to follow Mr. Beale's example, in practically recognizing the motto that "Union is strength," instead of forming themselves into many separate societies, and exemplifying, in the words of Berkley, that a "divided force is a rope of sand."

With these facts before us, we cannot doubt that Government is bound to do, on behalf of the Aborigines, all that humanity and justice demands. But if humanity and justice appeal in vain, policy may prevail. The cry of distress is at home; to assuage the calamity we are naturally directed towards Colonization; but that Colonization will not prosper—will not be well pleasing to the Most High, if, in taking nine tenths, we turn not to the best advantage for our wards, like honest guardians, the remaining tithe. The application of this tithe for the benefit of the coloured races is engaging the attention of the Society; but if measures be not taken, and that immediately, to arrest the progress of disease, famine amongst many tribes must consummate the fate which pestilence has advanced, and thus the efforts of the Society may be rendered unavailing.

The Society therefore appeals for pecuniary aid to carry out its views, and without waiting to perfect operations strongly indicated by necessity, it will, on an increase of income of £300, send out to some portion of the globe where unchecked disease is spreading desolation, a medical man to administer relief, and as far as possible, instruct the natives in the practice of his profession. At the same time it aims at extending its operations as the success of this experiment, and the means placed at its disposal, may sanction.





